



TRANSPORTATION SAFETY & ADVISORY COMMISSION

CITY OF HARRISONBURG, VIRGINIA

TO: Transportation Safety & Advisory Commission Members, Council members, City Manager Kurt Hodgen, Assistant City Manager Anne Lewis

FROM: Brad Reed, Transportation Planner

DATE: Monday, November 24, 2014

RE: Transportation Safety & Advisory Commission Summary from November 12, 2014 Meeting

The Transportation Safety & Advisory Commission met on Wednesday, November 12, 2014 at 8:30 AM in Room 205 of the City Municipal Building, 345 S. Main St.

Members and Advisory Members present included: Bill Blessing (Citizen Member), Len Van Wyk (Citizen Member), Russell Presnell (Citizen Member), Brad Reed (Public Works), Jim Baker (Public Works), MPO Greg Deeds (Police Doug Stader (DMV), Paul Helmuth (Fire), Lee Eshelman (JMU)

Guests Present: None

Commission meetings are open to the public and citizens are provided the opportunity to voice their views/concerns about any item before the Commission. It is the policy of the Commission to move relevant agenda items to the beginning of the meeting when citizens are in attendance to avoid detaining them for the entire meeting.

Welcome

Old Business

1. Request for restriction of trucks on Vine St

Mr. Reed introduced a renewed citizen request for the full restriction of trucks from Vine St. The request was submitted by Rev. Buie and asked for City Council to take direct action on the matter. At the October 14 City Council meeting, Vice-Mayor Chenault requested that the Transportation Safety & Advisory Commission review the request. In his letter, Rev. Buie states that the existing evening (9:00 pm to 5:00 am) truck restriction and 25 mph speed limit are poorly enforced, that his home value is depreciating due to high truck traffic, and suggests that

the business community may not be opposed to the change as it was in 1989. In response to past responses by City staff that Vine St has always been intended for truck traffic even prior to the majority of development between Country Club Rd and Old Furnace Rd, Rev. Buie comments that Vine St is a residential area that should not be used for truck traffic, noting that the 1966 Comprehensive Plan shows Blue Ridge Dr being used as a northern downtown bypass, not Vine St. He further suggests that the City would have obtained more right-of-way and built the street to a wider standard if Vine St was intended as an arterial route.

Mr. Reed shared some of the history of transportation planning for Vine St, noting that the 1980 Harrisonburg transportation plan and the 1989 & 1995 state highway plans all show Vine St as being an arterial route connecting Route 33E to Route 11N and Route 42N. In 1988, trucks were fully restricted on Vine St for a short time because of resident complaints, then in 1989 businesses opposed the ban and City Council chose to form a committee of stakeholders to review the issue. The 1989 committee recommended to only restrict trucks at night and to better enforce the speed limit, among other recommended actions.

Mr. Baker explained that Vine St was constructed to its current state as development occurred along the corridor. The City did its best to design the roadway to match its intended use as a northern arterial route/bypass, though the width of the street was unable to be brought to a 4-lane standard due to difficulties in meeting the needs for both the street and the developments. Though the street is only 2-lanes today, it was built using a cross section capable of supporting truck traffic. Mr. Baker also noted that the City and County Comprehensive Plans demonstrate future plans to improve Smithland Rd for a future connection to Route 11N near, or at, its intersection with Vine St which would likely alleviate truck traffic on Vine St.

In 2009, City Council received a complaint from Rev. Buie about truck traffic being unsafe and disruptive in the neighborhood given the perceived speeding and loud noise generation. He requested trucks be restricted from the street entirely and instead use E Market St to N Mason St to Gay St for access to Route 11N and Route 42N. This Commission recommended no change be made to the truck restriction at that time, noting that trucks are a small percentage of total traffic and that there is no reason to restrict trucks during the day as long as they are operated safely.

A 2011 City traffic study conducted from Country Club Rd to Old Furnace Rd showed the following results:

- ADT : 12,600 vehicles/day
- 85th percentile speeds of 32.4 mph NB and 30.9 mph SB
- 1.3% trucks, or 160 per day on an average weekday (dump truck or larger)
- 0.7% trucks with trailers, or 89 per day on an average weekday

Based on the historical planning records and the existing use of Vine St as a significant route for connecting Route 33E with Route 11N and Route 42N, it is City staff's recommendation that the truck restriction remain as-is, only during the evening hours. It is suggested that a traffic study be performed to determine whether trucks are breaking the evening ban.

MPO Deeds noted that there were issues in 1990/1991 with trucks using J-brakes and creating noise disturbance for the residents of Vine St. This was resolved through discussions with local businesses.

Mr. Blessing asked where the trucks on Vine St are going. Mr. Baker responded that their destinations are likely poultry plans and other industrial uses on Route 42N towards Broadway and Hinton in the vicinity of Route 33W. Frazier Quarry also uses this route from their north quarry, which is better than taking Smithland Rd and facing the very difficult intersection at Smithland Rd & Route 11N. Commission members suggested that VDOT consider ways to improve this intersection.

The Commission agreed with City staff's recommendation and voted unanimously to make no change to the existing evening-only truck restriction on Vine St.

New Business

2. Request for All Way Stop Control in Northeast Neighborhood

Mr. Reed relayed concerns from two citizens regarding poor sight distance at several intersections on E Wolfe St in the Northeast Neighborhood due to parked cars. One citizen requested that 4-way stops be considered at the intersections of E Wolfe St & Broad St and E Wolfe St & Myrtle St to improve safety, noting that other factors such as perceived high speeds on Broad St, Myrtle St, and Sterling St and possible added pedestrian traffic on a newly added E Wolfe St sidewalk may be added justification for a 4-way stop. The other citizen requested that parking be restricted to improve sight at the E Wolfe St & Sterling St intersection in the wake of a recent vehicle crash.

Mr. Reed shared a results map from a recent traffic study in the neighborhood, which is attached to this summary. He went on to note that there are existing parking restrictions on 4 corners of Broad St and 2 corners of Sterling St, but that they are inconsistent in their distance from the intersection and do not provide the 250-ft standard intersection sight distance that would be required at a new public street intersection with a 25 mph speed limit. Myrtle St has no existing parking restrictions at its intersection with E Wolfe St.

Public Works staff performed an all-way stop control study as per the FHWA Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices at the E Wolfe St & Broad St and E Wolfe St & Myrtle St intersections. These studies define engineering warrants for whether a 4-way stop would be appropriate at a given location, taking into consideration factors such as traffic volume, speed, and crash history. Neither of the studied intersections met the parameters needed to justify a 4-way stop because the volume on the streets is too low and fewer than 5 crashes were experienced in the past year that could have been prevented by a 4-way stop.

Mr. Reed went on to share the 1-Year crash history at each of the three intersections, finding the following:

- Broad St – 1 (DUI, ran stop sign)
- Myrtle St – 1 (crash report specifically stated that parked vehicles blocked sight)
- Sterling St – 2 (ran stop sign, unknown reason(s))

Upon review of the on-street parking restriction needed to achieve standard intersection sight distance, it was found that a number of homes without off-street parking would be impacted:

- Broad St – 2 multi-family buildings & 1 single family home
- Myrtle St – 2 single family homes (both have the option to park on E Wolfe St instead)

- Sterling St – 1 single family home (has the option to park on E Wolfe St instead)

It was also found that homes with off-street parking in this neighborhood typically have small driveways that can accommodate only 1-2 vehicles. For these reasons, it is anticipated that a parking restriction to achieve standard sight distance would be unfavorable to the neighborhood and may displace on-street parked cars to locations that block on-street parking access for homes near the middle of the street block.

Mr. Blessing commented that he travels the streets in this neighborhood frequently and a couple of the intersections have poor sight due to parked vehicles, particularly in the morning before people have left for work.

Mr. Van Wyk said that the stop signs at the E Wolfe St & Myrtle St intersection seem to be flipped, as E Wolfe St carries more traffic than Myrtle St. The Commission briefly discussed this and concluded that it would likely be a challenge to flip this configuration given the consistent nature of the stop configuration in the neighborhood, with east-west streets being stop controlled and north-south ones being uncontrolled. It was also noted that, to achieve sight lines after flipping these stop signs, there would likely be a need for a parking restriction on E Wolfe St which has much more on-street parking demand than Myrtle St.

Mr. Presnell commented that the E Wolfe St & Broad St intersection seems particularly bad, as a cab driver he knows was recently involved in an accident there.

Mr. Van Wyk said that 4-way stops may be good, whereas parking restrictions would be much harder. He asked whether there would be a downfall to using 4-way stops. Mr. Reed responded that there is an allowance in the 4-way stop warrant analysis for engineering judgment, which could be applied to situations where existing sight distance problems are unable to be resolved by other measures. It is the City's policy to first explore other alternatives prior to installing a 4-way stop that may not be warranted based on the MUTCD. This is important, as the issues related to the use of unwarranted 4-way stops are numerous and well-documented (<http://www.ite.org/traffic/documents/aha99b49.pdf>), with safety problems being created when drivers fail to obey the stop sign when they only rarely encounter conflicting vehicles on the cross street.

Mr. Baker suggested that there may be other ways to improve sight distance without going to the extent of a parking restriction for the full standard sight distance. Given the challenges involved with resolving this issue, the Commission requested that Public Works explore the issue further and return with ideas in December.

3. Request for parking restriction on Emerald Dr

Mr. Reed shared a complaint from a resident in a townhome on Emerald Dr regarding poor sight distance from a private entrance on the north side of the street near Deyerle Ave. No other residents using this entrance have contacted Public Works with similar concerns. The Commission recently took action on a similar request on the south side of Emerald Dr to the east of this entrance, deciding to mark edge lines on the street to restrict parking and allow vehicles to pull out farther to gain sight. That issue was a controversial one, with concern from the HOA on the north side of the street related to the fact that their access is much easier from the on-street spaces since their garages in the rear of the townhomes are on the lower floor. The HOA noted that removal of parking on the south side would push a higher concentration of vehicles

to the north side and take spaces away from those who may have difficulty using the stairs from their rear garages. Another issue raised during that process was that of blocked mailboxes, which are spaced apart in front of each unit and would likely be blocked more frequently with on-street parking restricted in certain sections. Mr. Reed explained that fulfillment of the new request would mean the removal of on-street front parking for about 11 townhome units.

Mr. Van Wyk questioned why there is such a problem on a small street with little traffic. The Commission noted that the previous parking issue on Emerald Dr had topographical challenges with a nearby hill and that the demand for on-street parking on the south side is much less than on the north side, yet the removal of parking was still very contentious. A parking restriction in this new location on the north side would likely be much more of a problem for homeowners. In light of these issues, the Commission recommended that the complainant obtain agreement from the neighbors impacted by the requested parking restriction prior to any action being taken.

Other Business / Announcements - None

Adjourn

ADT: 800
85% Speed
EB: 29 mph

Broad St
ADT: 1600
85% Speed
NB: 30 mph
SB: 32.6 mph

ADT: 800
85% Speed
EB: 31.5 mph
WB: 32.2 mph

Myrtle St
ADT: 550
85% Speed
NB: 30 mph
SB: 30 mph

ADT: 1300
85% Speed
WB: 29 mph

Sterling St
ADT: 1600
85% Speed
NB: 30 mph
SB: 30 mph

